



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 8
999 18TH STREET - SUITE 500
DENVER, CO 80202-2466

LO

980525

FEB 17 1999

Ref: 8EPR-EP

Kurt Kotter
Rawlins Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
1300 North Third Street
Rawlins, WY 82301

Re: Carbon Basin Coal Project, Final
Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Kotter:

In accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the Region VIII office of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above referenced Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

We would like to thank the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for their response to the EPA's comments and concerns expressed in our letter related to the DEIS. In particular, the additional information as now presented in Chapter 2, does provide the public, reviewers and decision maker a clearer understanding of the baseline conditions for the Carbon Basin Project Area (CBPA) that would be associated with a No Mining Alternative. The information brought forward from Chapter 3, Affected Environment, and now found in Table 2.18a is especially helpful.

The following comments were discussed during our conference call of January 29, 1999. We offer these comments and corrections for your consideration in preparation of the project Record of Decision (ROD).

1. Page ix, left column, second paragraph, first sentence. "The EIS analyzes a No Action Alternative project disturbance area of 3,270 acres"

As stated in the draft EIS comments, EPA prefers for the No Action Alternative to be a no mining scenario which would form a baseline to which other alternatives could be compared.

The final EIS adequately addressed most of EPA's concerns.



Printed on Recycled Paper

For future coal mining EIS's, the no action alternative could be defined as a no mining alternative with a clause stating that if the no action alternative were chosen, BLM's decision could not prevent the mining of state and private holdings.

2. BLM's Response to Comment M3, pg. 8-28. Table 2.18(a) does not indicate in the air quality section that a WDEQ defined significance level for 24-hour PM10 levels were being exceeded for two occupied residences and for wildlife.

If this level of significance were predicted to be exceeded, then this information should be included in the comparison of alternatives table 2.18(a). Also, for future EIS's, it is not advisable to simply delete the word "significance" when going from the draft to the final EIS.

As discussed in our conference call on 1/29/99, this level of significance does not apply to the Carbon Basin area since it is in an attainment area for National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The ROD should make this correction.

3. Table 2.18a, page 2-4, Climate and Air Quality. The columns for proposed action impacts and cumulative project impacts appears to be reversed. The cumulative impacts should always be greater than the proposed action impacts since baseline has to be added to the proposed action to get the cumulative impacts.

In addition, the $225 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ NOx concentration should be $2.25 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

4. Table 2.18a, pg. 2-13, Land Use. The degradation of Highway 72 is not the only significant issue related to transportation. Under the trucking option, the truck traffic will likely exceed the state's design standards for the highway. This is a significant impact and is something the public and decision-maker should know, and it should be presented in Table 2.18a. Also, the decision maker should know how much time and money will be required to bring the highway up to a design standard to meet the expected traffic levels and where the money will come from.
5. Response to Comment M15, page 8-29. "No specific mitigation is proposed at this time but it would be instituted at the permitting stage." This type of statement is not applicable to an EIS since it is the responsibility of the lead Federal agency to suggest mitigation even if it is outside the jurisdiction of the lead agency. See CEQ's 40 Most Asked Questions # 19 (a) and (b).
6. Table 8.2, page 8-30. The units at the top (lbs CO₂/yr) should be changed to (tons CO₂/yr).

The total CO₂ emissions listed for Transportation Option 1-2 (217,007 tons/yr) is too low. The correct total should be listed.

7. Table 8.2, page 8-30. As indicated by the CO₂ emissions for transportation options 1-2 vs. option 3, the increased CO₂ emissions for options 1-2 is 552,085 tons between 1999 and 2005.

EPA is pleased that this information has been included in the Final EIS. However, due to international concerns over global warming in which CO₂ emissions play a major role, the additional one half million tons of CO₂ emissions related to transportation options 1-2 should be clearly stated in Table 2.18a under "Climate and Air Quality". With this information, the decision-maker can clearly understand how his or her decision will affect the increased release of greenhouse gases. With the importance of transportation options for the Carbon Basin Coal Project, option 3 should have been addressed in the EIS as an "Environmentally Preferred Alternative".

8. The EPA understands the BLM will compare water quality data from existing nearby similar coal mines to determine if there are elevated levels of selenium, nitrate, ammonia and salts which may impact water quality from mining in the CBPA.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the FEIS. Should you have any questions related to our comments please contact the following members of my staff: Robert Edgar at (303) 312-6669 or Mike Hammer at (303) 312-6563.

Sincerely,



Cynthia G. Cody, Chief
NEPA Unit
Ecosystem Protection Program

cc: Elaine Suriano, EPA HQ-OFA
Robert Edgar, 8EPR-EP
Dana Allen, 8EPR-EP